

14 May 1951

MEMORANDUM FOR: MR. ROBERT P. JOYCE  
Department of State

SUBJECT: United States Interest in Consequences of Stalin's  
Death

1. You may recall that I spoke with you the other day regarding the desirability of this Government's giving serious planning consideration to such possibilities for exploitation as may exist incident to the death of Stalin.

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2. Recently you made a limited distribution of a paper written by [ ] in which he described some of the potentially significant possibilities. You may also recall that Admiral Stevens commented to you at some length upon [ ] paper. Others within and outside the Government have pointed out both orally and in writing that the fact of Stalin's death and the consequent readjustment necessary to be made in the Soviet senior hierarchy may well present opportunities to the West for well-timed action which may not thereafter be possible for a generation or longer. Such opportunities as will exist can be exploited by us to our interest only if we are prepared.

3. It is my understanding that the IFIS staff is now considering this matter from a propaganda point of view. It seems to me, however, that the questions involved pose issues of the most basic strategic political significance and that the propaganda or psychological warfare elements are but a relatively small portion of the whole.

4. Additionally the United States must first of all decide what it wishes to accomplish. In turn this what must be derived from a careful consideration of the various permutations, combinations and possibilities which we consider may likely present themselves or be possible of production.

5. The purpose of this note is strongly to urge that this matter be considered by a very senior political staff in the Department for the purpose of deciding the general minimum framework which should be included in a study of the issues and possibilities which may present themselves. This is a matter which is primarily of interest to the Department, although OPC undoubtedly can contribute ideas and suggestions to the planning and can participate effectively in some of the actions that unquestionably would need be undertaken.

6. It is not  
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6. It is not difficult for me to conceive of possible contingencies which would require actions to be taken now in preparation for additional actions on the occasion of Stalin's death. It is therefore my recommendation that arrangements be made for a relatively small number of competent and knowledgeable officials to consider the minimum content of an adequate study, including the nature and extent of the indispensable intelligence to support that study. As you well know, we do not at this time possess intelligence materials of the nature adequate to back up such a study as may be necessary.

7. I shall be glad to discuss this with you at any time you desire.

**SIGNED**

[Redacted Signature Box]

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